

The Castilian Crisis of the Seventeenth Century: New Perspectives on the Economic and Social History of Seventeenth-Century Spain. Edited by I.A.A. Thompson and Bartolomé Yun Casalilla (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1994) 328 pp. \$64.95

This collection of recent studies of the social and economic history of early modern Castile draws attention to a significant, if neglected, subject—the domestic causes and consequences of the decline of Spain. Eschewing traditional explanations, like the collapse of the Indies trade and the expulsion of the *Moriscos* (Spanish Moors), the authors offer a wide range of alternative interpretations in their search for the reasons underlying the reversal of the impressive demographic and economic expansion that Castile had experienced during the sixteenth century.

The consensus that the authors reach can be summarized as follows: (1) The pronounced demographic losses of the seventeenth century were less the product of catastrophic mortality than a response to changing patterns of population movement, including emigration to the New World and a falloff in rural migration to the cities; (2) urban areas were especially hard hit, as evidenced by the collapse of the formerly vibrant urban network centering around Segovia, Toledo, and Burgos (see Juan Eloy Gelabert's ambitious analysis of Castile's "deurbanization," along with Alberto Marcos Martín's detailed case study of Medina del Campo), and the dramatic decline of urban industry, illustrated by José Ignacio Fortea's excellent survey of cloth production in Córdoba; (3) the seventeenth century initiated a long-term pattern of decline that widened the gap between the economic performance of the ever more "ruralized" and stagnant center as opposed to the more vital periphery, especially in the coastal areas; and (4) this period also saw the consolidation of a social structure highly polarized between rich (the *poderosos*, as Enrique Llopis and others refer to them) and poor, in which the middle strata played an increasingly marginal role.

There is much less agreement around how broadly and deeply the depression was felt, and whether Castile suffered a crisis as opposed to a contraction or readjustment of its productive forces, as Gonzalo Anes, in particular, argues. Moreover, although one can hardly question the negative impact of increased government spending, especially when the public sector was becoming more inefficient and wasteful, it is far from clear whether the bulk of taxation fell on cities as opposed to the

countryside. Some cities managed to shift this burden to their subject towns and villages, but many did not, as Felipe Ruiz Martín argues in a short but extremely lucid essay. (That feudal privileges, moreover, effectively protected vassals against the depredations of the royal fisc is one of many intriguing suggestions awaiting further research). Bartolomé Yun's intelligent and well-balanced conclusion suggests that the answers to these and other questions might lie outside strictly economic history, and calls for more work to be done on institutional and political venues, as well as the "social history of the economy" (321).

Substituting detailed archival research for the discussions of government policy that dominated earlier debates on the Spanish economy, and unobtrusively shunning the cliometric obsessions of many of their colleagues overseas, a new generation of Spanish historians has produced a clearly written and well-translated volume that will introduce to a wider reading public some of the debates taking place within an increasingly lively and cosmopolitan historiographic tradition.

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